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EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AMONG PROFESSIONALS IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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Abstract. *The research delves into the realm of emotional well-being among professionals engaged in a spectrum of creative industries, including but not limited to publishing, media, graphic design, music, film, information technology (IT), and software development. The primary objective is to examine how individual emotions and professional responsibilities interact within*

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the creative sectors. The study on the emotional well-being of professionals in CI utilized quantitative research methods for the collection of numerical data, enabling measurements and statistical analysis. In addition to employing general scientific methods for results analysis, surveys were used for data collection. The study unfolds under thematic headings, each elucidating layers of understanding. Through this comprehensive lens, the aim is to unravel the emotional threads that weave the unique fabric of professional life within the dynamic and ever-evolving realm of CI. Acknowledging the emotional nuances embedded in creative work fosters a deeper understanding of the challenges, motivations, and inherent complexities that sculpt the professional lives of individuals in creative fields.

Keywords: Mental Health, Emotional Well-being, Creative Industries (CI), Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Mental well-being stands as a fundamental determinant of an individual's holistic health. Its significance resonates across various facets of life, impacting social engagements, occupational performance, self-care practices, caregiving proficiency, and the capacity to make informed decisions in both personal and professional realms (Dutta *et al.* 2023). Aligning with the World Health Organization's comprehensive definition, health is construed not merely as the absence of disease but as the attainment of complete physical, mental, and social well-being (Guthold *et al.* 2023).

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being where an individual can actualize their potential and achieve personal goals (Wikansari *et al.* 2023), adeptly navigate common life challenges, effectively cope with

stressors, engage in productive work and purposeful activities, and contribute meaningfully to the community. Positive mental health encompasses the possession of essential resources for leading a dignified life, succeeding in one's endeavors, maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, exercising control over one's life (Montano *et al.* 2023, 90–107), and experiencing a sense of connection, belonging, and purpose. The term "well-being", synonymous with "prosperity" (derived from the Latin "prosperitas" meaning "successful growth"), conveys, in its most expansive sense, a condition characterized by progress, achievement, and happiness (Soren & Ryff 2023, 1-21).

The concept of mental well-being encompasses the unity of emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Keyes & Lopez 2009, 89–95). Individuals who attain complete mental well-being demonstrate heightened resilience to stress, realize their full potential (Lee & Kim 2023, 1-18), exhibit increased productivity, and make substantial contributions to their community.

The tasks performed by active workers and the work environment, where they spend a substantial part of their days and lives, significantly impact their mental state (Tavoian & Craighead 2023, 1–7), either positively or negatively. It is important to identify work-related factors and the work environment that can influence the mental well-being of employees.

In the complex three-dimensional concept of mental well-being, the emotional, social and psychological components constantly interact dynamically, influencing each other in feedback loops. In this particular research, we dealt with the emotional component of mental well-being of employees in CI. In short, the emotional component refers to our ability to experience, express and regulate our feelings, as well as to cope with stress, challenges and problems. The emotional component is important because it affects our mood, self-confidence, motivation, satisfaction, creativity and relationships with others-

The research on emotional well-being aims to determine the extent to which professionals in Creative Industries (CI) have attained emotional balance (Warrier *et al.* 2023, 294–305). This encompasses aspects such as self-awareness, resilience in managing stress, handling positive and negative emotional triggers, coping with life crises, and maintaining stability. Additionally, it assesses the prevalence of positive or negative emotions in relation to their work.

The study embarks on an exploration of the nuanced facets surrounding the emotional well-being of professionals deeply ingrained in the dynamic milieu of CI. The research spans a spectrum of sectors, including publishing, media, graphic design, music, film, information technology (IT), and software development.

The intellectual foundation of this research is grounded in a thorough examination of authoritative literature, drawing from seminal works by reputable entities such as the United Kingdom Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), the United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). These frameworks and definitions act as primary instruments, imparting scholarly depth to research.

The study unfolds under thematic headings, each elucidating layers of understanding. Through this comprehensive lens, the aim is to unravel the emotional threads that weave the unique fabric of professional life within the dynamic and ever-evolving realm of CI.

The concept of the creative economy, often referred to as the "new economy" (Zakirova & Shaikhutdinov 2023, 416–419) revolves around creativity and innovation, emphasizing the generation of products and services with economic, cultural, and social impact. At its core lies the notion of CI, serving as a fundamental determinant of the creative economy and prominently featuring as an area of interest in the twenty-first century.

The research follows a carefully structured path. After establishing the groundwork in the introduction, the exploration unfolds through

distinct stages. It navigates through the landscape of CI, scrutinizing the unique attributes of creative work and immersing into the inherent emotional dimensions of these professions. The subsequent methodology section outlines the approach to investigating emotional well-being in CI professionals, setting the stage for the empirical insights disclosed in the exploration of emotional dynamics. As progress is made through these findings, the study shifts towards a strategic perspective, proposing methods to cultivate a supportive environment attuned to the distinctive needs of creative professionals. Ultimately, the conclusion synthesizes these insights, offering a comprehensive understanding of emotional well-being within the dynamic landscape of Creative Industries.

DEFINING THE LANDSCAPE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The genesis of the term "creative industries" is commonly attributed to 1997 in the United Kingdom, coinciding with the establishment of the Office for Creative Industries within the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) The initial document, the Creative Industries Mapping Document from 1998 (Dellisanti 2023, 46), provides a widely accepted definition: "Activities that result from individual creativity, skills, and talents and have the potential to create wealth and jobs through the production and exploitation of intellectual property" (Mariam *et al.* 2023, 270–278).

These activities are categorized within 12 sectors of CI, with no universally accepted nomenclature on an international level, and the coverage of sectors varies based on their development and prevalence in individual countries. The conceptualization of CI in Serbia aligns with global definitions, encapsulating a diverse array of activities deemed pivotal for both economic and cultural advancement. This analytical examination introduces a strategic classification adhering to international standards.

The core of CI in Serbia spans sectors such as Publishing, Print Media, Graphic Industry, IT Sector and Software Development, Marketing, Music and Film Industry, Design, Radio and Television, Fashion, and Traditional Crafts. In a contemporary context, the accelerated growth of the IT sector, software development, design, and the broader web domain is particularly noteworthy, highlighting their fundamental role in propelling Serbia's domestic economy. A meticulous classification based on specific activities is presented, aligning with both narrow and broader definitions of CI. Noteworthy sectors encompass Advertising and Marketing, Architecture, Crafts, Design, Film, Television, Video, Radio, and Photography, IT, Software, and Computer Services, Publishing, Museums, Galleries, and Libraries, as well as Music, Performing, and Visual Arts (Coll-Martínez & Méndez-Ortega 2023, 445–466).

This proposed classification serves as a comprehensive framework, facilitating a nuanced understanding and strategic approach to CI in Serbia. It duly recognizes their multifaceted contributions to both economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy.

Beyond being an exploration of emotional states, the research aspires to serve as a comprehensive guide for understanding, addressing, and enhancing the emotional well-being of individuals in creative professions. This research is anchored in the acknowledgment of existing gaps in current literature, positioning the research as a valuable resource that extends beyond academia. By addressing emotional well-being comprehensively, the study seeks to contribute not only to theoretical discourse but also to practical applications, fostering sustainable development and support mechanisms within the vibrant and ever-evolving field of CI. Thus, the classification becomes more than a static framework; it becomes a dynamic tool for understanding and improving the human experience within creative professions.

SPECIFICITIES OF CREATIVE WORK IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The distinctive nature of creative work within CI entails various nuances that significantly impact employment structures, income patterns, and working conditions. This section explores the specificities of creative labor, shedding light on the diverse categories of creative workers and the atypical forms of employment prevalent in this dynamic sector.

According to a comprehensive study commissioned by the European Commission and conducted by KEA, creative workers can be categorized based on their employment context. These categories include those working within the CI, those employed outside the creative sector, and individuals engaged in various professions within the CI. Each category presents unique challenges and opportunities, shaping the landscape of creative employment (KEA 2006, 75).

Particular attention is directed toward artists employed in CI, who often contend with distinctive working conditions marked by insecure income, career uncertainties, and irregular work patterns. The intricate nature of creative endeavors calls for a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by these professionals, highlighting the need for targeted support and policy considerations (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005, 1–14).

As digitization transforms the cultural sector of the European Union, so do the creative workforce experiences atypical forms of employment. Flexibility, mobility, project-based assignments, short-term contracts, freelance engagements, and voluntary activities become prevalent modes of work in the CI (MKW 2001, 25).

Moreover, the non-standard employment arrangements extend to factors such as working hours, location, and the distribution of creative tasks (Manić *et al.* 2022, 45–66), directly impacting the emotional well-being of professionals in the CI. Even in countries where CI are well-established, regulatory frameworks play an important role in safeguarding the

rights of creative workers and consequently contribute to fostering a conducive environment for improved emotional health within the industry.

Considering these specificities, the emotional aspects of creative work gain heightened relevance. The emotional journey within the creative process, marked by a multifaceted range of feelings, becomes closely intertwined with the distinctive characteristics of creative labor (Saintilan & Schreiber 2023, 1974). Artists and creators, often contending with insecure income, career uncertainties, and irregular work patterns, navigate through a different emotion that significantly contributes to the overall fabric of the creative process.

EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF CREATIVE WORK

The creative journey acts as a conduit for a multifaceted range of emotions. Individuals engaged in creative work navigate through a rich tapestry of feelings that significantly contribute to the overall fabric of the creative process (Saintilan & Schreiber 2023, 1961). From the exhilaration of accomplishment to the challenges of frustration, each emotion plays a distinctive role in shaping the narrative of creativity.

A profound understanding of the dynamic nature of the emotional journey within the creative process is imperative. It entails recognizing that emotions are not static but evolve throughout the various phases of ideation, creation, and completion (Green 2016, 28–35). The fluctuations in emotional states profoundly influence the mindset, productivity, and overall experience of artists or creators within their professional domain.

Delving into this intricate emotional interplay is not merely an examination of affective states but an essential aspect of understanding the holistic landscape of creative professions. Acknowledging the emotional nuances embedded in creative work fosters a deeper understanding of the challenges, motivations, and inherent complexities that sculpt the professional lives of individuals in creative fields.

METHODOLOGY OF EXPLORING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The study on the emotional well-being of professionals in CI utilized quantitative research methods for the collection of numerical data, enabling measurements and statistical analysis. In addition to employing general scientific methods for results analysis, surveys were used for data collection. The survey was conducted online using a questionnaire that consists of a total of 24 closed-ended questions. The first three questions refer to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the remaining 20 questions address the emotional components of mental well-being. The survey was conducted on a voluntary and anonymous basis.

Participants were asked to express their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "strongly disagree" and 5 to "strongly agree". The final score is determined by averaging the responses across all items, with a range from a minimum score of 1 to a maximum of 5. A higher score indicates a higher level of well-being.

After the survey, the data, collected from 109 actively engaged creative industry professionals through a comprehensive questionnaire, underwent statistical processing. Specifically, the statistical analysis focused on calculating the average values, reflecting a refined approach that emphasizes precision and reliability in interpreting the research findings. This streamlined use of the mean as a central measure ensures a robust and efficient examination of the emotional well-being data within the creative industries.

EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS IN CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

The research enlisted the participation of 109 individuals actively engaged in the CI, presenting a balanced gender distribution with 52 males and 57

females. The predominant age bracket falls between 31 and 40 years, encompassing 37.6% of the overall sample. Respondents under the age of 30 constitute 25.7%, mirroring the same percentage for those aged between 41 and 50. A smaller, noteworthy demographic, individuals aged over 50, comprises 11% of the sample.

The largest segment of respondents is engaged in electronic media (radio, television, portals, etc.), constituting slightly over a third of the sample (33.6%). Just under a third of the sample is employed in the IT sector and software development (29%). The music industry employs 12.1% of the participants, while 6.5% each are involved in the advertising industry and design. Additional participants are employed in the film, fashion, and publishing industries.

Most participants, comprising 53.2%, have permanent employment. Freelancers make up 19.3%, while an equivalent number have fixed-term contracts. A hybrid employment model, involving formal employment alongside freelance engagements, is present in 15.6% of the respondents.

In accordance with the findings presented in Figure 1, a predominant consensus is observed among respondents regarding various aspects of their professional experiences. Notably, a significant majority, accounting for 76% of the participants, aligns with the assertion that their work substantially contributes to the development of their knowledge and competencies. Similarly, 70% express concurrence in stating their satisfaction with the flexibility of their working hours. Furthermore, 68.8% report experiencing a sense of joy in the execution of their job responsibilities.

In terms of coping with workplace demands, a substantial portion of respondents, specifically 66.9%, indicates a belief in their ability to withstand pressure without succumbing easily. Additionally, 66% convey a sentiment of privilege associated with their engagement in the Creative Industries.

Moreover, a noteworthy aspect is the prevalent disagreement among respondents concerning feelings of loneliness and isolation during

job-related activities, with 66.9% expressing non-concurrence with this statement. Similarly, a substantial majority, constituting 68.8%, disagrees that work-related issues adversely affect their sleep or appetite. Additionally, a significant proportion, 58%, does not concur with the assertion that their job leaves them with insufficient time for engaging in other activities. These findings collectively provide valuable insights into the nuanced perspectives and experiences of professionals within the Creative Industries.

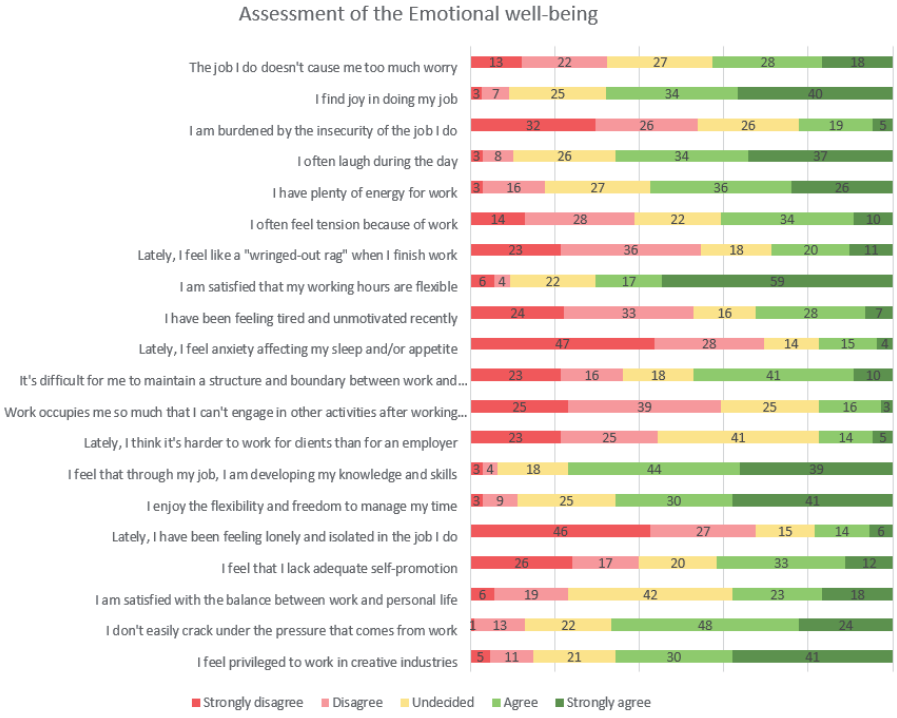
Assessment of the Emotional well-being
The job I do doesn't cause me too much worry 13 22 27 28 18
I find joy in doing my job 3 7 25 34 40
I am burdened by the insecurity of the job I do 32 26 26 19 5
I often laugh during the day 3 8 26 34 37
I have plenty of energy for work 3 16 27 36 26
I often feel tension because of work 14 28 22 34 10
Lately, I feel like a "wringed-out rag" when I finish work 23 36 18 20 11
I am satisfied that my working hours are flexible 6 4 22 17 59
I have been feeling tired and unmotivated recently 24 33 16 28 7
Lately, I feel anxiety affecting my sleep and/or appetite 47 28 14 15 4
It's difficult for me to maintain a structure and boundary between work and... 23 16 18 41 10
Work occupies me so much that I can't engage in other activities after working... 25 39 25 16 3
Lately, I think it's harder to work for clients than for an employer 23 25 41 14 5
I feel that through my job, I am developing my knowledge and skills 3 4 18 44 39
I enjoy the flexibility and freedom to manage my time 3 9 25 30 41
Lately, I have been feeling lonely and isolated in the job I do 46 27 15 14 6
I feel that I lack adequate self-promotion 26 17 20 33 12
I am satisfied with the balance between work and personal life 6 19 42 23 18
I don't easily crack under the pressure that comes from work 1 13 22 48 24
I feel privileged to work in creative industries 5 11 21 30 41
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Undecided
Agree
Strongly agree

Figure 1: Assessments of the emotional well being (Authors' Research)

The participants' perspectives on their emotional well-being in the workplace reveal positive sentiments. A significant percentage expresses satisfaction with the flexibility of their working hours, joy in performing their jobs, and a sense of privilege associated with working in the CI. Moreover, a majority of respondents do not report feeling lonely or isolated during their work, and they dispute that work-related issues adversely affect their sleep, appetite, or time for other activities.

At a global level, the research results indicate a significant connection between creative work and the emotional well-being of professionals in CI. The majority of respondents express positive emotional experiences and satisfaction regarding their work activities. These professionals perceive their job as a means to develop personal competencies and achieve fulfillment, concurrently feeling privileged to be engaged in creative sectors.

The participants exhibit indecision regarding certain aspects, such as the preference between occasional projects for clients or employers and satisfaction with the balance between private and professional life. Possible explanations for this uncertainty will be offered in the conclusion of this article.

FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

The research outcomes provide a comprehensive foundation for cultivating a workspace that nurtures the emotional well-being of creative professionals. By considering age, gender, occupational nuances, and employment structures, stakeholders can implement tailored strategies to create an environment that fosters both individual and collective emotional flourishing within the dynamic realm of CI.

Insights gleaned from the research illuminate potential strategies to cultivate and enrich emotional well-being in this vibrant and challenging domain.

Flexible work arrangements – Recognizing the positive correlation between satisfaction and flexible working hours, companies and agencies should explore and implement adaptable work schedules (Gašić & Berber 2023, 1–17). Offering options for remote work or flexible hours can empower individuals to balance professional and personal commitments effectively.

Mental health support programs – Establishing mental health support initiatives, including counseling services or workshops, can provide professionals with resources to cope with stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges (Brady *et al.* 2023, 286–291). These programs should be accessible, destigmatized, and tailored to the specific needs of creative workers.

Skill development and training – Fostering a learning culture within creative industries can contribute to a sense of accomplishment and personal growth. Investing in skill development programs, workshops, and continuous learning opportunities can enhance professionals' competencies, boosting their confidence and emotional well-being (Manelkar *et al.* 2023, 265–292). Clear communication channels' in order to establish transparent communication channels within organizations promote a sense of belonging and reduces feelings of isolation (Tankosić & Grbić 2022, 257–288). Regular team meetings, feedback sessions, and open-door policies create an environment where individuals feel heard, valued, and connected to their colleagues and superiors.

Project preference flexibility – Recognizing the indecision regarding project preferences, organizations can implement systems that allow creative professionals to express their project preferences or work on a variety of projects (Smite *et al.* 2023, 1–12). This approach fosters a sense of autonomy and ensures individuals are engaged in projects aligned with their interests.

Hybrid work models – Acknowledging the prevalence of hybrid work arrangements, companies should formalize and optimize these models (Hopkins *et al.* 2023, 1–21). Clearly defining roles, expectations, and support structures for individuals engaging in hybrid work ensures a seamless blend of formal employment and freelance opportunities.

Community building initiatives – Creating forums, both online and offline, for professionals to connect, share experiences, and support each

other can contribute to a sense of community (Bowe *et al.* 2022, 521–535). Networking events, industry forums, and mentorship programs foster a collaborative atmosphere and combat feelings of professional isolation.

Regular well-being assessments – Periodic assessments of emotional well-being can serve as early indicators of potential challenges (Gual-Montolio *et al.* 2023, 1–13). Organizations can implement routine surveys or check-ins to gauge the emotional pulse of their teams, allowing for proactive interventions and support.

Recognition and appreciation – Regular acknowledgment of achievements, milestones, and exceptional efforts can positively impact professionals' self-esteem and job satisfaction (Sherwood *et al.* 2018, 30–34). This practice not only reinforces the value of creative contributions but also fosters a collaborative spirit within the team, contributing to a positive work atmosphere. By consistently recognizing and appreciating the dedication and passion invested in the creative process, organizations can create a transformative work culture that boosts confidence, nurtures self-esteem, and ultimately enhances the holistic well-being of their creative professionals.

Holistic approach to professional development - Promoting a holistic approach to professional growth involves recognizing the interconnectedness of technical skills and emotional resilience within the context of CI. In practical terms, it means incorporating emotional intelligence and well-being into development programs (Slaski & Cartwright 2002, 63–68). By doing so, individuals not only acquire the technical prowess necessary for success but also cultivate the emotional resilience essential for navigating the unique challenges prevalent in the dynamic landscape of creative industries. This approach ensures that professionals are not just skilled practitioners but also equipped with the emotional acumen needed to thrive in the multifaceted and ever-evolving realm of their creative endeavors.

CONCLUSION

For the purpose of this research, the emphasis is placed on isolating the emotional component within the intricate three-dimensional framework of mental well-being, which also contains social and psychological components. There are also other constructs of mental well-being, which, in addition to the emotional, include cognitive, spiritual, physical and social dimensions. Although it cannot be said that the emotional component is more important than the others, because they are all interconnected and influence each other, emotional states, moods or what is called affective tone, which basically boils down to pleasant or unpleasant, always accompanies other processes. In the self-assessment of mental well-being, as well as in evaluating the mental well-being of others, reliance is placed on the prevailing affective tone in everyday life. This tone may be present in the background while individuals are focused on other activities, and at times, it may assume prominence in consciousness. However, emotional neutrality is seldom, if ever, experienced by individuals.

The research findings reveal a noteworthy correlation between creative work and the emotional well-being of professionals in the Creative Industries (CI). A substantial number of respondents articulate positive emotional experiences and express satisfaction with their work activities. These professionals perceive their job as a means to develop personal competencies and achieve fulfillment, concurrently feeling privileged to be engaged in creative sectors.

The segments in which respondents show indecision are the preference between occasional projects for clients or employers and satisfaction with the balance between private and professional life. Regarding the question of whether they prefer working on projects for clients or employers, or the statement indicating the perceived difficulty in working for the former compared to the latter, indecision may stem from the variability in respondents' experiences in this regard. Moreover, individuals in CI exhibit a

higher level of motivation driven by the intrinsic value of their work rather than external factors, such as their employer. In essence, they display a robust intrinsic motivation, evident in their satisfaction with competence development, the fulfillment derived from their work, and the sense of privilege associated with working in CI.

In terms of the balance between professional and private life, one could presume (and further research may elucidate this assumption) that it represents the flip side of flexibility. Respondents have a positive feeling towards the flexibility of their work schedule, but this sometimes leads to weaker time management, poorer structuring and organizing of time, thereby losing the boundary between work and private, social and free time. This indicates the need for employees in CI to strengthen self-discipline and improve their time management skills, in which they can be helped by seminars, trainings, workshops, coaching or literature dedicated to that.

The findings provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between creative work and emotional well-being. It turns out that creative work has a beneficial impact on emotional well-being, which has already been firmly established in the psychology, despite possible adverse and aggravating factors, such as job insecurity, blurred boundary between work and free time, etc. The findings also provide informed implications for additional support and further improvement of individuals' emotional well-being in CI.

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EMOCIONALNO BLAGOSTANJE PROFESIONALACA ANGAŽOVANIH U KREATIVNIM INDUSTRIJAMA

Sažetak. *Istraživanje se bavi domenom emocionalnog blagostanja među profesionalcima angažovanim u različitim sektorima kreativnih industrija, uključujući, ali ne ograničavajući se na izdavaštvo, medije, grafički dizajn, muziku, film, informacione tehnologije (IT) i razvoj softvera. Osnovni cilj istraživanja jeste ispitivanje na koji način se individualne emocije i profesionalne odgovornosti međusobno prožimaju unutar kreativnih sektora. Analiza emocionalnog blagostanja profesionalaca u kreativnim industrijama koristi kvantitativne istraživačke metode radi prikupljanja numeričkih podataka, što omogućava sprovođenje merenja i statističku analizu. Pored primene opštih naučnih metoda za analizu rezultata, korišćena je anketa kao sredstvo za prikupljanje podataka. Istraživanje je strukturisano kroz tematske naslove, pri čemu svaki od njih pruža jasnije uvide u analizirane aspekte. Koristeći navedenu metodologiju, u radu se analiziraju osnovni slojevi emocionalne dinamike i istražuje kako se individualne emocije prepliću oblikujući jedinstvenu strukturu profesionalnog života unutar neprestano evoluirajućeg konteksta kreativnih industrija. Sagledavanje emocionalnih*

nijansi, inkorporiranih u kreativni rad, podstiče sistematično razumevanje izazova, motivacija i inherentnih kompleksnosti koje oblikuju profesionalni život pojedinaca u kreativnim poljima.

***Ključne reči*:** mentalno zdravlje, emocionalno blagostanje, kreativne industrije (KI), motivacija